

Real Voices, Real Choices
Conference Planning Committee Meeting
Conference Call Minutes
September 4, 2009

Welcome and Introductions

Present: Sharon Britten, Judie Didriksen, David Helling, Justin Idleburg, Austin Montague, Mark Ohrenberg, and Marge Parrish, Robert Qualls, and Jan Wagler,

Absent: Manfred Leonhard, Helen Minth, Anita Morrison, and Jennifer Nugent

Staff Present: Carol Dickneite, Vickie Epple, and Leigh Gibson

Committee Membership

The committee discussed the composition of the group for the 2010 conference. Several members of the current group will continue serving on the steering committee for the upcoming year including: Judie Didriksen, David Helling, Justin Idleburg, Marge Parrish, and Jan Wagler. Sharon Britten would like to serve on the committee, and she has asked her supervisor for his approval to do so. She will let Leigh know whether she will be involved as soon as she receives a response. Neither Helen Minth nor Manfred Leonhard were able to participate on the call, so Leigh will verify whether they intend to remain on the committee. Austin Montague and Mark Ohrenberg decided to resign. Austin cited his ongoing health concerns and his inability to regularly attend meetings. Mark Ohrenberg is leaving the group because he felt he could not make the commitment this year due to his obligations at his job. The group discussed whether Anita Morrison should continue to be considered a member. Since she did not attend meetings for five consecutive months prior to the conference or attend the conference itself, the group decided to remove her name from the list.

The make-up of next year's committee was also discussed. Twenty-eight people who attended the conference volunteered to assist with planning next's event. While the committee was pleased with the show of interest, they agreed it is important to control the growth of the committee so it does not become unwieldy. At this time consumers of services from the Division of CPS comprise a large majority of participants. With the resignations of Mark and Austin, the Division of DD loses its only representative and representation from the Division of ADA decreases two. In view of these losses, the

committee decided to focus upon recruiting members from those divisions. No new members representing CPS will be added. After reviewing the list of volunteers, the committee chose several people whom they would like to see join the committee. Leigh will contact those individuals and invite them to attend the next meeting.

Future Meetings

The first meeting of the committee will take place during October. Leigh determine when of meeting rooms available at DMH and forward the information so committee members may indicate which of the days they are available to attend. Leigh will schedule the meeting on the date chosen by the majority. The question arose as to whether the committee should plan to meet more than once a month during the initial planning stages of the conference. Leigh recommended waiting until the meeting in October to make that decision to allow new members to participate in the decision.

Next the committee addressed the importance of committee members' presence at the meetings. All agreed that members need to commit to attending the meetings regularly. The group determined that adequate notice is given prior to the meetings to allow people time to plan their work schedules to allow them to be present at meetings. Austin suggested illness should be the only acceptable reason for missing a meeting. After some discussion the group decided illness would be the only excusable absence, and that a person may asked to leave the committee if he or she misses three meetings. Leigh will communicate this information to potential committee members so they are aware of this requirement.

Review of the Conference and Survey Summaries

The committee discussed their impressions of the success of the conference. All felt the event went very well, and it received excellent reviews by the attendees who completed the general survey about the conference. There were a number of positive comments about the True Colors, Justin's House of Bipolar, and 12 Step. Committee members noted some areas of concern that were echoed in the comments made on the surveys.

- **Scheduling:** While the pace was fine on Sunday afternoon, the large quantity of presentations and workshops on Monday overwhelmed people. Both committee members and those surveyed felt that the sessions after dinner were tiring and extended too far into the evening. The length of the workshops and the breaks between them were also discussed. Many survey respondents felt the presenters were cut short, and that there was not enough time for people to ask questions. Austin made the recommendation that session participants be limited to one

question or comment each during the question and answer time to prevent anyone from dominating the discussion. Many attendees felt there should be more free time during the conference. Some expressed a desire simply to relax, but others wanted an opportunity to enjoy the resort and the local area.

- **Facilitating Communication:** Committee members felt there needed to be additional activities to encourage interaction among consumers. Many attendees noted a desire to have social activities so they could relax and get to know each other. Mark expressed concern that attendees may not have felt involved enough in the presentations and workshops. He would like to see roundtable discussions or other activities that would involve people in discussions about issues that are important to people across divisions. Other committee members thought it would be good to start the conference with specific activities to help people meet and learn about each other. One suggestion was to have people sitting at the same table to work together to develop answers and then have a representative from the table report the results of the discussion to the group at large such as Paul Hanna had people do during the True Colors exercise.
- **Special Art Project:** The Pillows of Unrest project received good reviews. The committee discussed having a similar planned art activity for next year. Marge suggested doing scrapbooking since the scrapbooking presentation had been very popular and many people had expressed interest in participating in a hands-on workshop on that topic. Jan suggested having everyone design a quilt block that could be sewn together to display around the state. She offered to cut the extra unused pillowcases into squares to use as blocks.